Chronic stress and substance use: The moderating effects of religion among African Americans
Chaniqua Mazyck, Ann Chen, Krystal Christopher, Sarah Childress, Sandra Yan, & Ezemenari M. Obasi

Introduction
- Alcohol and tobacco use are preventable causes of chronic diseases that disproportionately impact the African American community (Delva et al., 2005).
- There is a growing body of literature linking chronic stress to alcohol and tobacco use.
- The purpose of the study was to investigate the moderating role of religious coping in reducing the relationship between chronic stress and substance use in the African American community.

Methodology
- Participants of the study were recruited within a larger federally funded study.
- African Americans between the ages of 18 to 25 years old
- Battery of assessments included: chronic stress, race related stress, religion, alcohol and tobacco use.
- Hierarchical linear regression was used to analyze the results.

Results
- 277 participants
- 72.2% female; Age: 20.4 ± 1.8 years
- Financial stress was positively associated with the number of days tobacco was used each month ($B = .59, F(1, 222) = 11.58, p = .001$) and accounted for 4.7% of the variance in the number of days tobacco was used each month in the sample.
- Religious coping moderated the relationship between financial stress and days of tobacco use ($B = .32, F(1, 220) = 73.60, p < .001$) accounting for an additional 22.6% of variance. Johnson-Neyman technique: The effect of financial stress of tobacco use each month was significantly different from zero for values of religious coping above 16.34 (58.85% of the sample).

Conclusions
- Chronic stress was not a significant predictor of alcohol use
- Chronic stress was a significant predictor of tobacco use over the past three months.
- The interaction between chronic stress and religious coping was a marginally significant predictor of tobacco use.
- Financial stress – and its interaction with religious coping - was a significant predictor of tobacco use over the past three months.
- Future research may want to leverage a longitudinal research design to test causal relationships between stress, religious coping, and substance use.
- More research is needed to understand religious coping as a protective factor for substance use among African American emerging adults who are chronically exposed to stress.